

USER MANUAL

#GLOBALGUYTALK

A COOPERATION BETWEEN

MAKE
EQUAL

Si. Swedish
Institute

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WHAT IS #GLOBALGUYTALK?

The concept is simple. Gather a group of men and start talking about things that men rarely speak about. There's a conversation guide for each of nine themes to help you along. The goal of #globalguytalk is to give us men the chance to create a more equal society, starting with ourselves. The initiative was started by the Swedish foundation Make Equal and is being spread to the rest of the world by the Swedish Institute.

Few of us speak with each other about what it means to be a man: about societal expectations, requirements, and norms of how to be a 'real man'. This non-communication often adds a lot of pressure. To provide for families, to be strong, to not show emotions, and to not let people see weaknesses. Traditional gender norms risk affecting our well-being and building up obstacles for how we can live our lives.

For example, men in general have fewer close and long-lasting friendships. Men to a higher extent miss out on close relationships with their children and families. Many keep feelings to themselves in a destructive way, and few ask for help when they experience mental or physical challenges. This could cause mental illness and emotional issues.

Both historically and today, this could also have negative effects on others. For instance, it often leads to women having to take the main responsibility for home and family, and for many children it means growing up with an absent father. Some men even express their emotions through violence, instead of talking about them. In Sweden, for example, physical and sexual violence are statistically most often committed by men. This has fatal consequences. Of course, this does not apply to all men, but it's time for us as a group to challenge the societal masculinity norms and take responsibility for our emotional problems, and make sure that they don't become other people's problems.

#globalguytalk is an opportunity to share experiences with each other and reach a deeper level of understanding of how norms and expectations often create an unhealthy, destructive environment that we are responsible for changing.

We cannot continue living in a world where men are teased for crying, take unnecessary risks, and miss out on close friendships – a society where men are not able to actively participate in their children’s lives or where women fear taking walks at night.

We want a gender equal world, where everyone regardless of gender can be who they want to be and feel safe. #globalguytalk provides us men with increased access to a range of emotions, to stronger relationships with ourselves and others, and various ways of expressing masculinity.

Everything is connected, and a conversation between us where we take responsibility for ourselves is a step in the right direction. It’s a step towards change and a more gender equal world.

Below, you will find practical instructions on how to arrange a conversation between men.

Let’s start talking!

WHAT TO DO

Don't worry. You can do it. We know this might feel difficult and scary – and that you might have a few questions and concerns, such as 'Who should I do this with?', and 'Will other men really want to talk about these topics?'

It is totally normal to have those kinds of concerns. These are questions that we rarely or never talk about – especially not among boys and men. It's not as difficult as you might think, and you also have this manual and the conversation guides to help you. This manual includes everything you need to hold a successful conversation. We'll guide you through everything from how to prepare to reflections afterwards. And of course, how to hold the actual conversation. We'll take it step by step – it should feel safe and easy to get started.

How and where you meet isn't so important. You can meet over dinner, go for a walk, or connect online. It can be with your friends, the guys from your sports club, maybe a few family members, or even boys and men that you don't know. The conversation should be in focus. The most important thing is to get started. At first, it might feel difficult and awkward, but after a while the conversation will start flowing.

As the conversation leader, there are a few things you can keep in mind to ensure a good conversation. Perhaps the most important thing is that everyone has the chance to speak on the same terms. For this to work, all participants need to feel safe participating while being themselves. This is crucial, because many men haven't spoken about these things before – and they are most likely nervous or scared to do something wrong.

In the checklist on the following page, you can find concrete tips for creating an open and welcoming conversational environment. If it helps, you can think of these as a code of conduct, but the list also works as a summary of what you need to do before, during, and after the conversation.

CHECKLIST TO GET STARTED

- **Consider which men you want to have a conversation with and invite them.**

The first time, it might be easiest to invite men who you are fairly certain will accept the invitation. Maybe these are close friends, family members, or colleagues. Or you might think it's easier to hold a public conversation with men that you don't know. It can actually be easier to open up to complete strangers. Everyone has their own preference, so think about how it feels for you and what you want to do.

- **Read through this manual for conversation leaders** so that you feel sure of the structure and how everyone can create the safest and best conversation possible.

- **Choose a theme** that you think is suitable to start with. You can choose from: love, friendship, avoidance, vulnerability, ego, and sex – as well as from three custom themes for colleagues, dads, and young men. You don't have to use the conversation guide for dads just because you are a dad. But the custom guides contain specific questions and topics.

- **Each theme is built up in different levels**, making questions more advanced the further you go. Start with the easiest level if you feel uncomfortable or unsure of how the other participants will feel about talking. When the group has had a few conversations, you can start at a more advanced level.

- **Read through the conversation guides** in advance and choose the questions that you want to use. Looking through the guides beforehand makes it easier to adjust the conversation if necessary. Maybe some questions require extra time, or your time may be limited as it is. If you know the structure well, it is easier to adjust during the conversation. You will most likely not have time for as many questions as you think.

Start talking!

PREPARING FOR THE CONVERSATION

Anything shared in the group stays in the group

One thing that is good to agree on is that anything shared in the conversation stays within the group. That way, no one has to worry about others finding out what was said.

Decide how the conversation should be led

Appoint a person to lead the conversation. This doesn't have to be you, and you can also rotate during the conversation or between different conversations. The leader should pay extra attention so that no one is interrupted, and everyone has the chance to speak. You probably don't mean to interrupt each other, but sometimes people get so engaged in the conversation that they can forget to be considerate. Taking others into consideration is something we all can get better at together. So, go through these rules before the conversation begins: We do not interrupt each other. We know that we all mean well. We stay focused on the subject.

Decide how you will share the floor

To make sure that you don't interrupt each other, decide how you will share the floor. Without a method for this, some people can easily stay quiet because they don't feel confident enough to demand attention. Take turns speaking in a circle, raise your hands, or some other system.

Create an open conversational environment

Discuss how you can create an open environment where everyone feels safe enough to ask questions if there is any confusion. This is particularly important since the conversation is about listening to each other, supporting each other, and sharing experiences.

Find your own order

You don't need to have a specific order to the questions. Just choose questions that interest you. If you want to, you can go through the questions in order.

DURING THE CONVERSATION

Start with yourself and your own experiences

It is important that everyone speaks from their own perspectives and individual experiences of being men. Sometimes it can feel easier to talk about men in general. That is important too, but it's not our goal here. So, try to encourage using phrasing such as 'When I feel...', 'My experience is...', and 'I wish I could...'. When speaking from your own experiences, the conversation becomes more personal and rewarding.

Avoid critiquing others

We are all different – even if we share the experience of being seen and treated as men. Despite this, our experiences, opinions, and reflections can be totally different. Respect this and avoid critiquing or judging what other people say during the conversation. It is never okay to say hurtful or offensive things, not about other men in the conversation or about anyone else.

Interpret kindly

Try to interpret others kindly. It takes courage and can be difficult to share your experiences, especially if it's something you've never done before. By interpreting kindly, we assume that everyone means well and that we grow together through the conversation.

No one needs to 'perform'

Try to have a down-to-earth attitude during the conversation. The point isn't to show off your knowledge but rather to open up, both to others' stories and by sharing your own.

REFLECTIONS AFTER THE CONVERSATION

It may be the first time many of you are speaking about these topics, so it can be useful to reflect together after the conversation. How did it feel to speak about masculinity?

Here are a few points to discuss:

- **How did it feel** to speak on these topics?
- **Did something feel** difficult or uncomfortable?
- **What will you take with you** from this experience – and is this something you would consider doing again?
- **Have you learned anything about yourself** during the conversation? (Share, if you feel comfortable doing so.)
- **Are there any concrete changes** you want to make in your life that you discovered during the conversation?
- **If you want to continue these conversations**, you can start a group chat or something similar where you can keep in touch and schedule new conversations.
- **Remind each other** that everything said during the conversation stays in the group.
- **Encourage other men to take initiative** and hold their own conversations – or why not invite more men and hold a new conversation on your own?
- **Go to globalguytalk.com and register your conversation** – your reflections are anonymous. With your contribution, we can build a global map and show how many conversations have been held and where men are speaking the most. If you want to tell others on social media, tag your post with #globalguytalk.

HOW DO I ARRANGE A DIGITAL #GLOBALGUYTALK?

Important conversations are usually best held offline. But sometimes there are conditions that prevent us from meeting in person. Luckily, it is easy to arrange a digital #globalguytalk. Here are a few tips to help make your digital conversation as successful as possible.

In digital environments, it is more difficult to read facial expressions and body language. Therefore, it is even more important to go through the code of conduct carefully before the conversation begins. Try to find a way to ask for the floor, for example by writing in the chat.

For increased comfort and security, everyone should have their camera on. Not just to see each other, but also to be sure that everyone is listening.

Agree on a platform that works for everyone. There are many platforms for holding digital meetings and conversations. Make sure the platform is secure, supports multi-party calls and is cost-free. Also, make sure that there is no time limit that is too short.

Whatever is said during the conversation stays within the group – this is just as important online as offline. No one is permitted to record the conversation, take screenshots, or document what is said in the conversation in any way. Look into how these functions work on the platform you are using so that you can create rules together. For example, on many platforms, a red lamp is lit when someone is recording.

Q&A

Question: Why do we need a conversation leader?

Answer: To make sure that everyone has the opportunity to speak, to help maintain an open and honest climate, and to ensure that you stick to the subject. A conversation leader can also prepare practical things and choose topics and questions. Having a leader also makes it easier to understand who should read the questions, introduction, et cetera.

Question: What should we consider in terms of size if we meet in person?

Answer: The best size is 3–5 people per table. Of course, it works just as well for everyone to sit at the same table. Just think of it as a good amount to have a conversation where everyone can get their saying.

Question: If I know that I previously have crossed a line sexually, been violent in another way, or committed a crime, is #globalguytalk a concept I can use to work on myself?

Answer: #globalguytalk is not about processing traumatic events or crimes. If you have subjected others to physical or sexual violence, you should get professional help and turn to the justice system. If you have subjected others to sexual violence or other violence that you are aware of, you should not arrange a #globalguytalk. You can still attend conversations that others have arranged. This also applies to people who are speaking on behalf of #globalguytalk. #globalguytalk is a form of violence prevention but not a substitute for professional help or the justice system.

Question: Can we hold a #globalguytalk that costs money to join?

Answer: #globalguytalk is a concept for the public to use, free of charge. If you need money for food, other costs, or loss of income it is okay. No financial gain can be made from use of the concept.

Question: Which conversation guides should I choose?

Answer: That's completely up to you. The different topics build on matters that Swedish men have identified as things they rarely talk about but would want to talk about without outside judgement. If it's the first time you host a #globalguytalk, you might choose a conversation guide that feels easier and not as in depth. Each guide is divided into different levels, for you to get an idea about which questions would be good to start with.

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